



City of  
**Rockville**  
Get Into It

**Historic District Commission Staff Report:  
Evaluation of Significance (for Demolition)  
HDC2013-00600, 207 N. Van Buren Street**

**MEETING DATE:** 10/18/12

**REPORT DATE:** 10/11/12

**FROM:** Robin D. Ziek, Preservation Planner,  
Planning, CPDS  
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**APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:** Evaluation of Historic Significance  
(demolition proposed)

**APPLICANT:** Helen Lu  
375 N. Van Buren Street  
Rockville, MD 20850

**FILING DATE:** 9/5/12

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff finds that the property at 207 N. Van Buren Street does not meet HDC criteria for historic designation, in that it is not associated with a significant historic event, person, or pattern of events as detailed in Rockville's historic contexts, and does not exemplify Rockville's mid-20th century architecture or heritage.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Helen Lu filed an evaluation request on 9/5/12. Per 25.14.d 1 of the Zoning Ordinance, the HDC will evaluate a property for historic significance if the owner contemplates full demolition of the dwelling and so requests. Staff provides historic research and makes a recommendation to the HDC concerning the historic significance of the subject property.



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Letters received – none



## RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the property at 207 N. Van Buren Street does not meet HDC criteria for historic designation, in that it is not associated with a significant historic event, person, or pattern of events as detailed in Rockville's historic contexts, and does not exemplify Rockville's mid-20<sup>th</sup> century architecture or heritage.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

**Location:** 207 N. Van Buren Street (see Attachment A)

**Applicant:** Helen Lu

**Land Use Designation:** Single unit Semi-detached Dwelling,  
Residential

**Zoning District:** R-60 (see Attachment B)

**Existing Use:** R-40 (Single Unit, Semi-detached dwelling, Residential)

**Parcel Area:** 9,302 sf

**Subdivision:** Simmons Addition to Rockville - Block B, Lot 23

**Building Floor Area:** 1,012 sf

**Dwelling Units:** 1

## Vicinity

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning			
Location	Zoning	Planned Land Use	Existing Use
North	R-40	Single Unit Semi-detached Dwelling, Residential	Dwelling, single unit detached
East	MXT	Low Density Multi-unit	Dwelling, semi-detached
South	R-40	Single Unit Semi-detached Dwelling, Residential	Dwelling, single unit detached
West	R-60	Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Residential	Dwelling, single unit detached



**Site Analysis:**

The subject property is located in Simmons Addition to Rockville, in the 200 block of N. Van Buren Street, north of Beall Avenue. The house faces west towards the street, and there is a driveway with a double parking pad along the south side of the property that extends from the street only as far as the house. The rear yard is fenced, and there is a small storage shed in the back yard.



Rear (W) elevation



Back yard with storage shed

The brick house has recently been damaged by fire, and there is a hole in the roof, as well as interior damage. All of the windows are currently boarded up, except for the one by the front door.



The properties on this block are one-story brick Ranch houses, with the exception of two new homes at 200 and 222 N. Van Buren. N. Van Buren Street ends at North Street and there is no egress from the neighborhood except through Beall Avenue to the south of the subject property.

The property is zoned R-40, Single unit, Semi-detached, Residential. In order to accommodate a duplex on a lot, however, the road frontage must be a minimum of 80' to provide 40' frontage for each unit. As the lot is only 50' wide, this property can only accommodate a single residential unit, such as currently exists.

Confronting properties on west side of N. Van Buren Street, looking south.



## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The subject property is a one-story brick Ranch house with a half-polygonal roof applied to a front-facing gable projection on the north portion of the front façade. Because of the fire, windows are boarded up. However, the window to the left of the front door is a 1/1 vinyl replacement window. And the door is a metal door with a fan-light in the top portion, above simulated panels.





The “chimney,” seen on the back roof panel, is actually a metal faux brick chimney.

The house is very similar to the house at 213 N. Van Buren Street, which was evaluated for historic significance on July 19, 2012, and determined to be ineligible for historic designation because it did not meet the City’s criteria for HD zoning.

## HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE:

### Context

An evaluation of historic significance begins with a historic context. In the City of Rockville, the *Historic Historic Resources Management Plan* (1986) provides a series of seven historic contexts. This property falls within Context #7, as the property was platted for development in 1946 and the house was constructed soon after (1951).

Historic Context #7 covers the years from 1931 – “present” (1986). During this period, the focus of development was on the large-tract subdivisions such as Twinbrook and Hungerford. These and similar subdivisions are characterized by the construction of many identical homes at one time. In some cases,

the houses may be turned on the lot to give the appearance of a different design. Roof forms may vary while the house layout remains the same. Different details, such as stone inlay panels on the front brick façade, are often added to vary the appearance of the houses. This house conforms to this, albeit on a much smaller scale. Multiple homes were constructed within this small subdivision, and they are all very similar but have some variation in detailing. The polygonal roof on the front façade is an example.

While the City lacks an updated 20<sup>th</sup> century context, the recently published *Historic Buildings Catalog* provides a citywide architectural survey that includes 20<sup>th</sup> century houses. None of the properties in this portion of N. Van Buren, however, are included in the catalog.

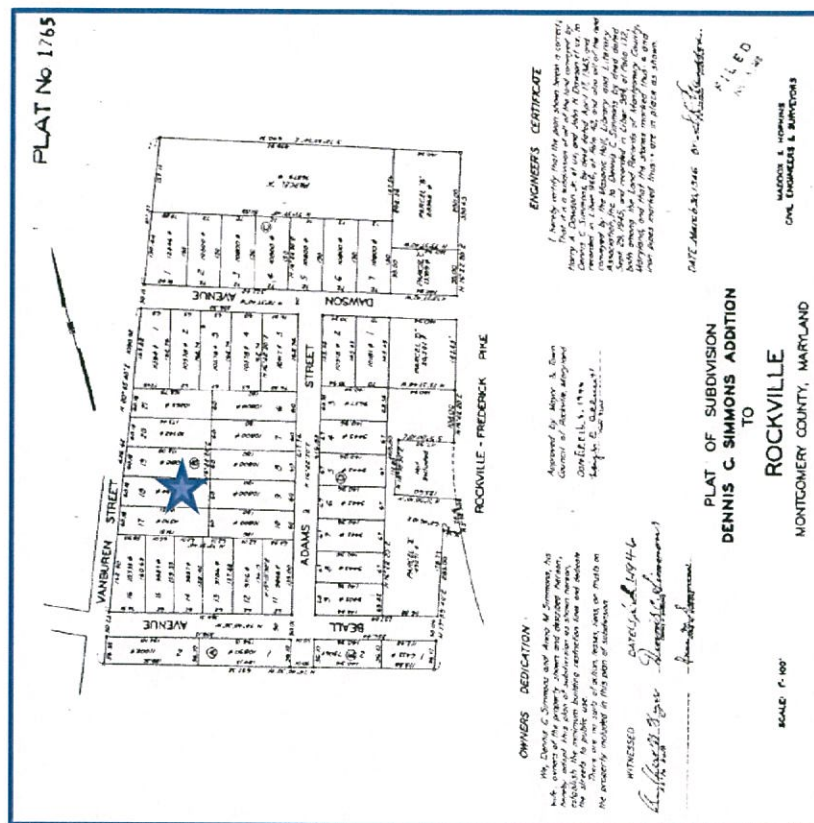
The history of the subject property begins with the purchase of the land by Dennis C. Simmons.<sup>1</sup> Dennis Calvin Simmons (1898-1990) was a real estate broker who moved to Rockville from Columbia, North Carolina in 1926. His earliest career was as a barber, and he operated the Simmons Beauty and Barber Shops in Montgomery County from 1925-1961. In the early 1950s, he purchased property on Rockville Pike and opened his real estate brokerage firm.

The subject property is part of the subdivision plat known as "Dennis C. Simmons Addition to Rockville." It was originally platted in 1946, and recorded at Plat no. 1765. The west side of N. Van Buren Street was platted as Beall's Subdivision of Rockville. The property that Mr. Simmons purchased ran from the east side of N. Van Buren Street to what was then, Rockville-Frederick Pike, but is now N. Washington Street. The lots were a generous size, and measured ca. 60' x 150' (9,000 sf). Dawson Avenue was platted as a through street, and Adams Street and Beall Avenue were also included in the subdivision.

In 1950, part of this original subdivision was resubdivided, and recorded as Plat #2530. The resubdivision was filed by the Berlin Construction Company, Inc., which had purchased the property from Mr. Simmons. The lot sizes were reduced to a 50' width. The subject property is identified as Block B, Lot 23 and measures 50.15' x ca 170' (with the north and south boundaries being of slightly varying length).

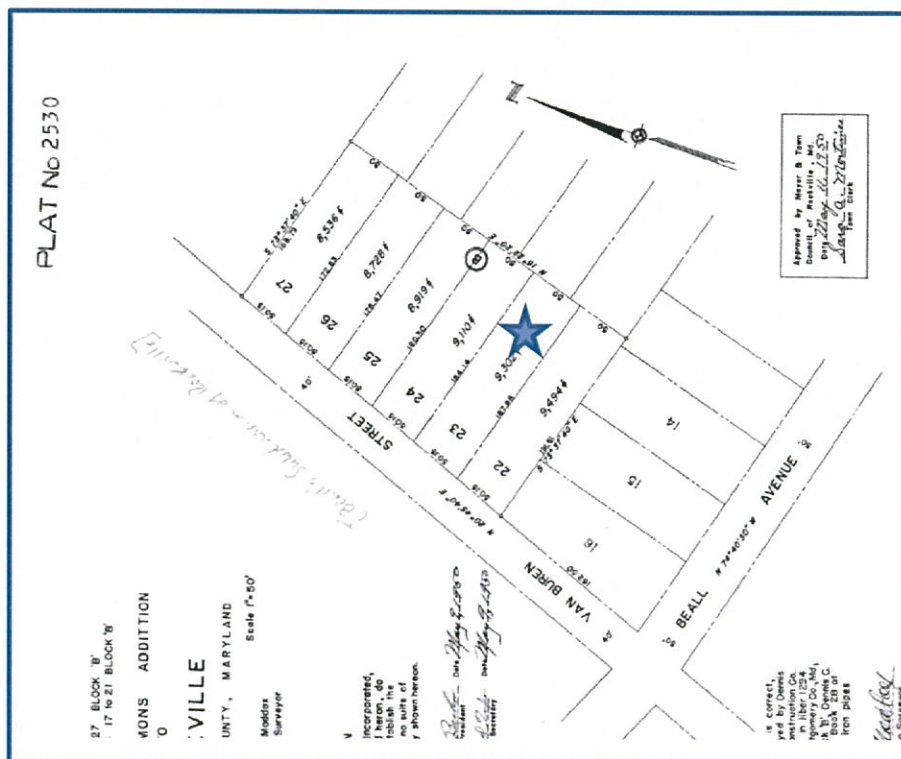
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<sup>1</sup> Harry A. Dawson, Jr., and John H. Dawson to Dennis C. Simmons by deed (4/17/1945) L966/F42; and Masonic Hall, Library & Literary Association, Inc. to Dennis C. Simmons by deed (9/29/1945) L984/F172.



1946 Subdivision Plat

Block B, Lot 13



1950 Subdivision Plat

Block B, Lot 23



## Lot 23, Block B, Dennis C. Simmons Addition to Rockville (Plat Book 37/Plat 2530)

<b>Liber/Folio</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Grantor</b>	<b>Grantee</b>
966/42 [16 acres]	4/17/1945	Harry A. Dawson, Jr., and John H. Dawson	Dennis C. Simmons
1294/532	9/9/1949	Dennis C. Simmons	Berlin Construction Co.
1525/585	5/2/1951	Rock-Villa Corp. (Jos. Berlin, President)	Junius H. and Vera C. Morris
2634/390	8/8/1959	Junius H. and Vera C. Morris	Frances G. Richardson, unmarried
2935/646	1/29/1962	Frances G. Richardson, unmarried	Austin E. and Virginia N. Kinna
4046/440	2/26/1971	Austin E. and Virginia N. Kinna	Edwin Thompson, Jr. & Gladys F. Thompson
8547/450	10/31/1988	Gladys f. Thompson (Edwin died 12/3/1974)	George C. and Donna N. Baker
17298/211	7/1/1999	George C. and Donna N. Baker	Alvaro A. Betancur and Juanna L. Montoya-Betancur
34501/273	6/18/2007	Default?	U.S. Bank National Association (\$450,000)
34860/638	8/21/2007	U.S. Bank National Association (\$450,000)	Helen Lu
42807/354	12/2/2011	Keh-Ming Lu and Helen Lu	Helen Lu

The house was constructed in 1951, by the Rock-Villa Corporation, Joseph Berliner, President. He also established the reduced lot sizes with the resubdivision in 1950.

Historic designation is recommended if a property meets one or more of the HDC's adopted Criteria. A staff review of these criteria, with staff evaluations, is provided below.

## **HISTORIC DESIGNATION CRITERIA**

*The following checklist is used to assist in evaluating the significance of nominated properties. Standing structures and sites, including archaeological sites, must be determined to be significant in one or more of the following criteria to be found eligible for historic designation:*

### **I. Historical and cultural significance:**

- A. Event: the site of a significant historic event  
*No.*
- B. Person: identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society  
*No.*
- C. Pattern of Events: exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities  
*No.*
- D. Cultural Value: has character, interest, or value as part of the development, or cultural heritage of the City, County, State, Nation  
*No.*

### **II. Architectural and design significance:**

- A. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction  
*No.*
- B. Represents the work of a master  
*No.*
- C. Possesses high artistic values  
*No.*
- D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction  
*N/A*
- E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.  
*No.*

### **Historic Integrity of structure and site:**

- *Alterations to house: Fire damage, window replacement, door replacement*

**Level of site significance:** *N/A*

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Posting of sign on property two weeks prior to meeting

Postcard notices sent out two weeks prior to meeting

Staff report posted on City's web site one week prior to meeting

## **FINDINGS**

Finding that the property does not meet the Criteria for Historic Significance (as reviewed above), staff recommends that the HDC does not recommend this property for historic designation.

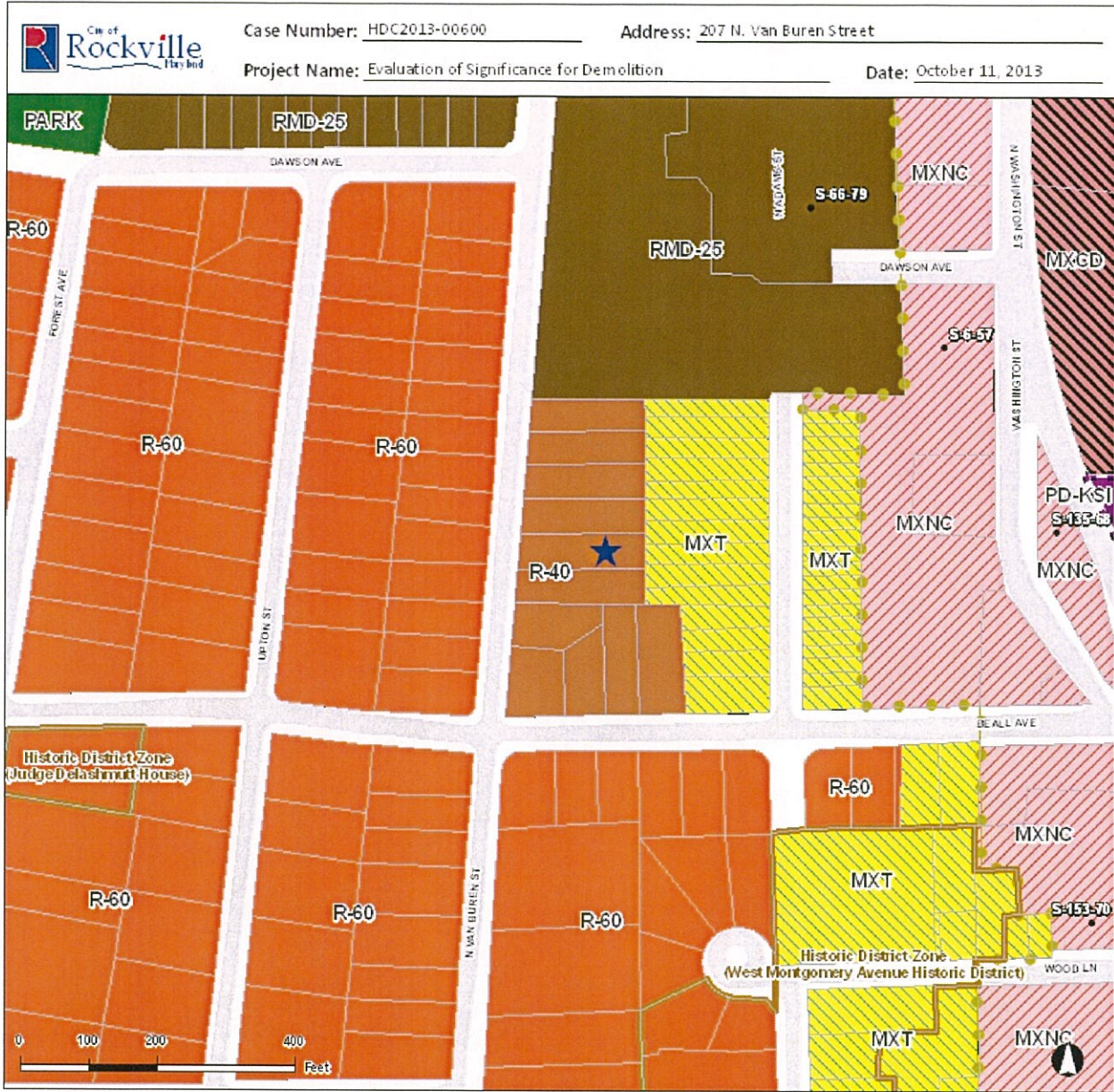


## AERIAL MAP





ZONING MAP



Legend

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>R-400 - Residential Estate</li><li>R-200 - Suburban Residential</li><li>R-150 - Low Density Residential</li><li>R-90 - Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Restricted Residential</li><li>R-75 - Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Residential</li><li>R-60 - Single Unit Detached Dwelling, Residential</li><li>R-40 - Single Unit Semi-detached Dwelling, Residential</li><li>RMD-10 - Residential Medium Density</li><li>RMD-15 - Residential Medium Density</li><li>RMD-25 - Residential Medium Density</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MXB - Mixed-Use Business</li><li>MXC - Mixed-Use Commercial</li><li>MXCD - Mixed-Use Corridor District</li><li>MXE - Mixed-Use Employment</li><li>MXNC - Mixed-Use Neighborhood Commercial</li><li>MXTD - Mixed-Use Transit District</li><li>PD - Planned Development</li><li>PARK - Park Zone</li><li>IL - Light Industrial</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Rockville city limits</li><li><b>Zoning Overlays</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clusters</li><li>Historic Preservation Parcels</li><li>Lincoln Park Conservation Overlay</li><li>Planned Developments</li><li>Town Center Performance District</li><li>Twinbrook Metro Performance District</li><li>Special Exceptions</li></ul></li></ul> |
|---|--|--|



## AERIAL DETAIL



Case Number: HDC2013-00600

Address: 207 N. Van Buren Street

Project Name: Evaluation of Significance for Demolition

Date: October 11, 2013



★ Project Location